



**Student-Led Research Program
Research Areas of Interest**

YEAR 2008-2009

PREAMBLE

The Student Led Research Grants initiative connects the B.C. Government with university students and their professors to conduct research that addresses public policy issues. It provides students with unique opportunities to apply their research skills to challenges faced by government and encourages them to think of the public service as a place of employment.

To support the implementation and development of the research projects cross government, the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services is providing one time funding grants to post secondary institutions in British Columbia to support student led research. The intent of the grant is to promote partnerships with post secondary institutions and to facilitate student research. The program is coordinated through the Cross Government Research, Policy and Practice (CGRPP) Branch, OCIO. This initiative provides a great opportunity for students to conduct research on key social issues and enhance the quality of their education. Students may be able to assist government in addressing social issues by researching best practices, approaches and help government to move forward with an evidence informed policy and practice approach. This funding will also support and encourage student opportunities in government as part of government's corporate human resources plans to help us develop our knowledge workforce for the future.

The funding available is up to \$1,500 per student, and may support new or ongoing research projects. The institutions will be responsible for allocating and administering the student grants. The funding is provided directly to students in the form of honorariums, or in the form of travel and education grants to attend and present research at conferences.

A product from the research is expected to be forwarded to the CGRPP office, for example a research paper, the results of a survey, or a presentation. The following link provides a template for writing papers:

http://www.chsrf.ca/knowledge_transfer/communication_notes/comm_reader_friendly_writing_e.php

This funding will be available to students who are:

- Currently enrolled in a B.C. public Post Secondary institution
- Graduate or undergraduate students

Ministry contacts may be able to support student research. Students requiring such support are encouraged to contact the CGRPP (see below).

This document suggests a list of research areas and questions applicable to policy analysis in BC. It is aimed at guiding the grant applications. The list of research areas in this document is not exhaustive, and any new ideas will be examined, as long as they relate to the interests of the Government of BC. If necessary, applicants are welcome to include components from multiple areas in their proposals.

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - BUSINESS

CITIZEN-CENTRED SERVICES

Governments traditionally deliver many types of services to their citizens. In a changing social, demographic, economical and technological context, needs and expectations for services may evolve. Governments have to adapt the way they deliver services, through new technologies, new governance structures, new internal organizations, and eventually new working habits.

This area of research investigates how a government can best deliver services to its citizens.

Trends and expectation in service delivery

This area of research specifically looks at the trends in expectation for government service from different demographic groups. For example, expectations from young adults experiencing their first interactions with the government may differ from the expectations of seniors. Research could investigate questions such as:

- What does good government customer service mean for the public aged 20-35 in today's environment?

Delivering services in remote areas

In British Columbia, not everybody has easy access to government offices. However, services should be available to citizens living in remote areas, which may require some adjustments. Building on examples from other jurisdictions, this area of research investigates service delivery in the remote places of British Columbia. A sample of research question is:

- How does customer service and service delivery need to change to accommodate the needs and perceptions of regional customers?

Reviews of other jurisdictions

Successful stories (or examples of lessons learned) exist. They are always valuable. Governments, universities, or large public institutions similar to governments may have implemented successful service deliveries. This area of research will focus on reviewing other jurisdictions and other institutions to highlight the success factors (or lessons learned) to service delivery, including governance models, regulations, technologies, human factors, internal services to departments and staff, etc. Research could investigate questions such as:

- Which other public sector jurisdictions have strong positive relationships with the public they serve? Why?

EDUCATION

LITERACY

This area of research investigates quantitative aspects of literacy and is not limited to students in the faculty of education. Students from all social science fields of are welcome to propose research topics for grant consideration.

Literacy skills help people fully participate in society. To date, much research has been conducted into proven strategies that help develop reading, writing and oral language skills. In B.C., many of these strategies are implemented within environments that adapt to both the type and age of learners. Presently, there exists a series of programs and initiatives that support the development of literacy for all ages, and for various groups of learners.

Research in the area of education has focussed primarily on strategies and methods to improve literacy; however, on a larger scale, less is known about the overall levels of literacy in B.C. and other jurisdictions, the economical and social implication of literacy in B.C., and the overall success of the strategies and programs.

Three fields are of specific interest for quantitative approaches:

Literacy and early education

- Age groups are four to seven years old.

Literacy and English as a second language

- With emphasis on early education, up to age 12.

Literacy and children with special needs

- This includes any kind of special need such as: visual impairment, cognitive and behavioural challenges.

The goal is to gather, identify, analyze and discuss as much quantitative evidence as possible about literacy for the three above groups, in B.C. and/or other jurisdictions.

One long-term goal is to develop and conduct a series of meta-analyses on literacy. All pieces of work that help move toward this goal are to be considered.

To move toward this goal, we encourage students to focus their research interests on the quantitative aspects of literacy. Original work that analyses quantitative aspects of literacy will be welcomed. As well, reviews or annotated bibliographies that will identify, organize and discuss scientific work relevant to an eventual inclusion in future meta-analyses will also be welcomed. Analyses may adopt different angles, among which include: evaluation of programs aimed at improving literacy, educational indicators, investigation of social impacts of literacy, and examination of economical issues related to literacy in B.C. and other jurisdictions.

a <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/literacy/>

ENVIRONMENT

Most suggested themes for research on the environment do include policy and/or regulatory components. Some themes may also focus mainly on technology and methods.

Air quality

This area of research focuses on scientific and policy issues related to outdoor air quality. This area includes topics such as:

- Research on policy or regulatory aspects of air management at provincial and local scales.
- Public perception of air quality, the consequences of public perception and approaches to changing public perception (e.g., economical consequences of public perception on tourism).
- Effects of outdoor air quality on people (e.g., health issues, well being issues, stress, etc.) and on the environment (e.g., visibility, ecosystems, etc.).
- Policies related to air quality in other jurisdictions; best practices, challenges and barriers.
- Reporting and communicating about air quality (e.g., reporting methods, effects of types of communication on the public).

Climate change

This area focuses on scientific and policy issues related to climate change. Topics may relate to monitoring and assessing impacts of climate change. Topics may also include solutions to climate change.

Monitoring and reporting

This area investigates instrumentation and methods used to monitor and report on outdoor air quality and water quality.

Product stewardship

In B.C., the government places the responsibility of recycling on producers and consumers. This area of research investigates the policy, regulatory, economical and behavioral aspects of recycling products such as beverage containers, electronics, lead-acid batteries, used lubricating oil, pharmaceuticals, paints, solvents, and tires. For more information see <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/epd/recycling/>.

For more information on the above research areas related to environment see <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/air/index.html>

HOUSING AND CONSTRUCTION

Housing trends and projections

This theme examines trends related to housing in B.C. The goal is 1) to identify the shifting contexts that may have implications on housing needs or access to housing and, 2) to provide projections over the next 5, 10, 15, or 20 years when possible. Maps and graphics are valuable additions to the discussion.

Housing policies and programs

This theme investigates: The nature, costs and benefits of the range of housing management models and practices (this may include local or national models of jurisdictions such as Canada or Australia); the effectiveness of current and prospective ways of dealing with housing assistance that help secure different housing outcomes; and the attributes of housing assistance which make a difference (positive or negative) to the outcomes for individuals, households, and communities.

Homelessness

This research theme adopts a positive approach to homelessness and focuses on solutions (e.g., evaluation of programs, interventions, and policies; examination of factors that assist people in moving out of homelessness; inter-jurisdictional comparison of plans to eliminate homelessness: funding, programs, outcomes, lessons learned).

Aboriginal housing issues

Aboriginal housing issues are relevant to all of the research themes. In addition, the following two suggestions have a particular focus on the aboriginal community: Demographics and housing needs for aboriginals in B.C.; culturally appropriate design of social housing for aboriginals in B.C.

Special populations / specific solutions

This research theme focuses on finding solutions to the housing needs of special populations. It includes: housing individuals with mental illness and addictions in the private market (factors that lead to success); youth housing (16-24 year olds); review of how self-sufficiency housing programs are structured in different jurisdictions, and their outcomes.

Housing affordability – towards solutions

This theme examines Government's use of housing assistance and other policy levers to increase the supply of affordable housing. This includes the examination of factors shaping the supply of affordable housing, and how policy responses across housing, planning, taxation, land use, and financial options might improve affordability. Some examples of research questions include: Barriers facing new immigrants or young families in B.C., and examination of solutions; local government solutions to affordability; financial options and financial partnerships for social and affordable rental housing; potential of factory-built housing for affordability; secondary rental market.

Economy and labour

Better understanding of economic and labour issues related to housing and construction is vital for policy development in B.C. This research area includes topics such as: The purchasing power of the B.C. population in relation to housing; banking practices, funding models that may support access to housing; health of, or trends in the B.C. construction industry including factors such as workforce, policies and regulations, economy, availability of resources, pressures the industry is facing; extend of the renovation market in B.C.

Technical and green aspects of construction

Examined issues are discussed in regard to regulations, bylaws, political orientations, barriers to technology development, and/or construction with new technologies. Research questions may include: The embodied energy of building material and building process (including construction); barriers and solutions regarding the use of green innovations in B.C.; potential of innovative material and technologies such as wood construction, passive energy technologies, alternative building materials (e.g., earth construction), water and energy conservation.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENT

Governments provide a range of community development services and works with other sectors to address matters related to such policy areas as women's and seniors' issues and regional development. Some related research themes may include:

POLICY ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN

Women and the B.C. economy

- Opportunities for participation
- How can women reach their economic full potential?
- Non traditional occupations
- Women in leadership

Aboriginal women

- Aboriginal women's health development
- Aboriginal women's economic prosperity

Violence against women

- Linking policy and programs to outcomes of transitional housing for women fleeing violence

RURAL B.C.

Community development in rural B.C.

- How can attention be focused on rural B.C. (e.g.: Ontario's Rural Council?)
- What are the opportunities for rural B.C.?
- Economic diversification
- Community transition

POLICY ISSUES RELATED TO AGING AND SENIORS'

Seniors' policies in British Columbia, especially those focussing on:

- Maximizing seniors' participation in physical activities
- Effective elder abuse prevention strategies
- Ways to promote positive images of aging
- Reducing workforce barriers for older workers

ABORIGINAL STUDIES

Aboriginal issues are relevant to all the research areas mentioned in this document. The following areas of research have a specific focus on the aboriginal community

Urban Aboriginal

This theme relates to social issues and economic development of urban aboriginal, specifically for women and youth. Research foci may include:

- Information and consultation (e.g., how are urban Aboriginal youth and women consulted about social, political, economic, and cultural factors that impact them? What methods worked or did not work?);
- Involvement of women and youth in Aboriginal political organizations such as Assembly of First Nations, Native Women's Association, and Congress for Aboriginal People;
- Involvement, knowledge and engagement with mainstream politics (e.g., awareness of MLA or federal MP representatives, levels of understanding of their roles);
- Protocol and best practices to support governance chapters within the context of treaties (e.g., How First Nations groups in urban settings have achieved a balance in the way they address protocol matters; Lessons learned from 1994 Commonwealth Games, 1997 NAIG and 2008 NAIG).

Off-reserve B.C. First Nations

This theme analyzes the understandings that B.C. First Nations' hold with regard to their role and responsibilities to their members, particularly regarding off-reserve service provision.

Aboriginal youth

Based on the last census, Aboriginal youth is one of the most rapidly growing populations. This area of research investigates how governments (federal and provincial) use this information to design public education, post secondary education, and trades training.

Economies and economic opportunities

This theme investigates economic and community development for Aboriginal people. Research foci may include:

- Investigation of examples of First Nations communities who have taken traditional economies and transformed them into contemporary economies;
- Role of leadership in closing the socio-economic gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal population;
- Investigations of the levels of awareness and experience about business in urban settings (i.e. licensing, municipal bylaws) compared with business on-reserve, for both Aboriginal people and public agencies that deliver business programs;
- Evolution of business opportunities and professional development for Aboriginal artists in B.C. (e.g., comparison with past studies; analysis of income of Aboriginal compared to non aboriginal artists).

Measuring Aboriginal socio-economic outcomes

Measuring socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal people helps addressing the gap with the rest of the population. This area of research identifies socio-economic indicators of well-being for First Nations communities. It analyzes outcome variations among communities, and identifies factors that contribute to these variations. Specific focus is on the link between education and community wellness/prosperity, and on the factors that contribute to a healthy Aboriginal youth population. Another goal of this research is to develop a reliable statistical method to measure the progress of the socio-economic outcomes for the Aboriginal population.

New Relationship

This research area investigates: The community perceptions of the "New Relationship" and its' impacts; the level of government policy consistency with regard to the New Relationship principles, "best practices" for government / Aboriginal engagement; definitions of "culturally appropriate" (e.g., How is this expression used with respect to policy, program development and service delivery; and how is 'successful cultural appropriateness' is measured)

Perceptions of treaties versus rights and title approaches to land and resource resolution

CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Government has an interest in the economic and social factors, as well as policies, programs and services that improve outcomes for vulnerable children, youth, young adults and families. Information from different jurisdictions is of interest.

Government delivers many types of services to children and families. Good practice, new ideas and evaluations that can inform policy and practice are areas of interest.

Outcomes and knowledge exchange

- The development and measurement of child, youth and family outcomes (e.g., health, education, economic well-being and social relationship outcomes).
- Quality assurance mechanisms that are used in child welfare systems.
- Strategies and methods for improving the transfer of research and evidence into policy and programs.

Trends and emerging issues

- Child and youth trends.
- Longitudinal studies of children and youth.
- Comparisons of child and youth issues across jurisdictions.
- Emerging issues for children and youth.
- The influence of social trends on children and youth (e.g., immigration, and changing family structure) and programs and services.
- Strength and risk factors for children and youth.

Issues affecting Aboriginal children and youth

Programs and services

- The identification of programs and services that have been shown to improve the education, health, economic well-being and social relationship outcomes of vulnerable children and youth.
- The effects of different types of programs and services (e.g., care versus out of care options).
- Strengthening family functioning including the improvement of parenting skills.
- Improving and assessing the effectiveness of service delivery for children and youth.
- The role of evaluation in the improvement of policy, programs and services.
- The role of consultation in the improvement of policy, programs and services.
- The role of research in the improvement of policy, programs and services.

For information on the operational framework that guides research in these areas, please use the following link http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/about_us/commitment.htm

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

This area of research is mostly focussed on literature reviews that will help improve services and outcomes for children and youth in BC (international academic and grey literature). The following topics and examples of research questions are of special interest:

Sexual abuse of girls and boys

- What are the prevalence rates of children who are sexually abused?
- What are the impacts of sexual abuse on immediate and lifecourse well-being outcomes for children and youth?
- What works to mitigate the impact of sexual abuse? What situations, interventions and programs are successful or promising in improving outcomes?

Domestic violence

- What do we know about the impact of domestic violence on children (both direct and indirect)?
- What are effective prevention and intervention programs?
- What are the outcomes of these programs for children and youth?

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

- What are the prevalence rates of FASD?
- What are effective preventative methods/programs/initiatives?
- How do these successful programs work?
- What works to improve cognitive functioning of children with FASD?

Accountability Systems

- What accountability systems in other jurisdictions (i.e. UK and USA) are effective at improving reporting on social services (excluding health and education)?
- How do these systems work? How are they accountable to citizens?
- What can we learn from other jurisdictions about their accountability systems for social services?

For more information, please see: <http://www.rcybc.ca/>